

Phoenix Fire Department Youth Firesetter Intervention Program

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Youth Firesetter Intervention Program

Our mission: *to provide educational and counseling intervention to youth and their families experiencing problems with firesetting.*

Our goal:

- *to stop firesetting behavior*
- *understand consequences of firesetting*
- *identify ways to make better choices*

Our Family Helping Yours

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Program Description





Youth Firesetter Intervention Program – An Overview

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), children under age 15 start one of every seven fatal structure fires.

National Safe Kids statistics show curiosity fires are the leading cause of death and injury for kids nine and under.

In Phoenix, Arizona, during the year 2002, there was over \$775,720 dollars in property loss due to youth set fires. The Youth Firesetter Intervention Program (YFS) was established in response to our customers' request for help with fires set by children.

The YFS Program includes:

The *Educational Component* includes voluntary fire safety classes offered monthly. Age related curriculum and materials have been designed for each of the classes. Classes are offered free of charge. Consequences of firesetting, responsibilities, and fire & life safety are emphasized.

A *Parent Component* is available during each of the educational classes. Parents meet to discuss Arizona Arson Laws, parenting issues and fire safety.

The *Behavioral Health Component* consists of a panel of mental health professionals who offer counseling services to residents of Phoenix. Firesetters and their families who may benefit from counseling are referred to a panel member. The Phoenix Fire Department pays for seven counseling sessions.

The *Diversion Component* is for youth arrested for a first time arson offense. Attendance at an educational class and counseling are mandated by the Juvenile Court.

The *Community Component*: Realizing youth firesetting is a major community issue, the Community Advisory Panel(CAP) was established. This panel is comprised of local and county representatives from agencies involved with youth. The Panel meets on a quarterly basis to discuss solutions to fire related problems involving youth.

"Customer service is the cornerstone of our organization"



New Additions for 2002

We made a bigger impact on our community by:

West Valley YFS Class

The West Valley Youth Firesetter Intervention Program is a partnership of West Valley fire departments that have come together to provide a seamless youth intervention service to the community. The fire departments involved are Glendale, Peoria, Sun City, Surprise, Goodyear, Luke Air Force, and Phoenix.

The program is an offspring of the Phoenix Fire Department's Youth Firesetter Intervention Program currently offered on the first Saturday of every month. The West Valley program's educational classes mirror Phoenix's program while adding one more class during the month. This also fills the need of a more convenient location for the growing West Valley population.

Handbook For School Personnel

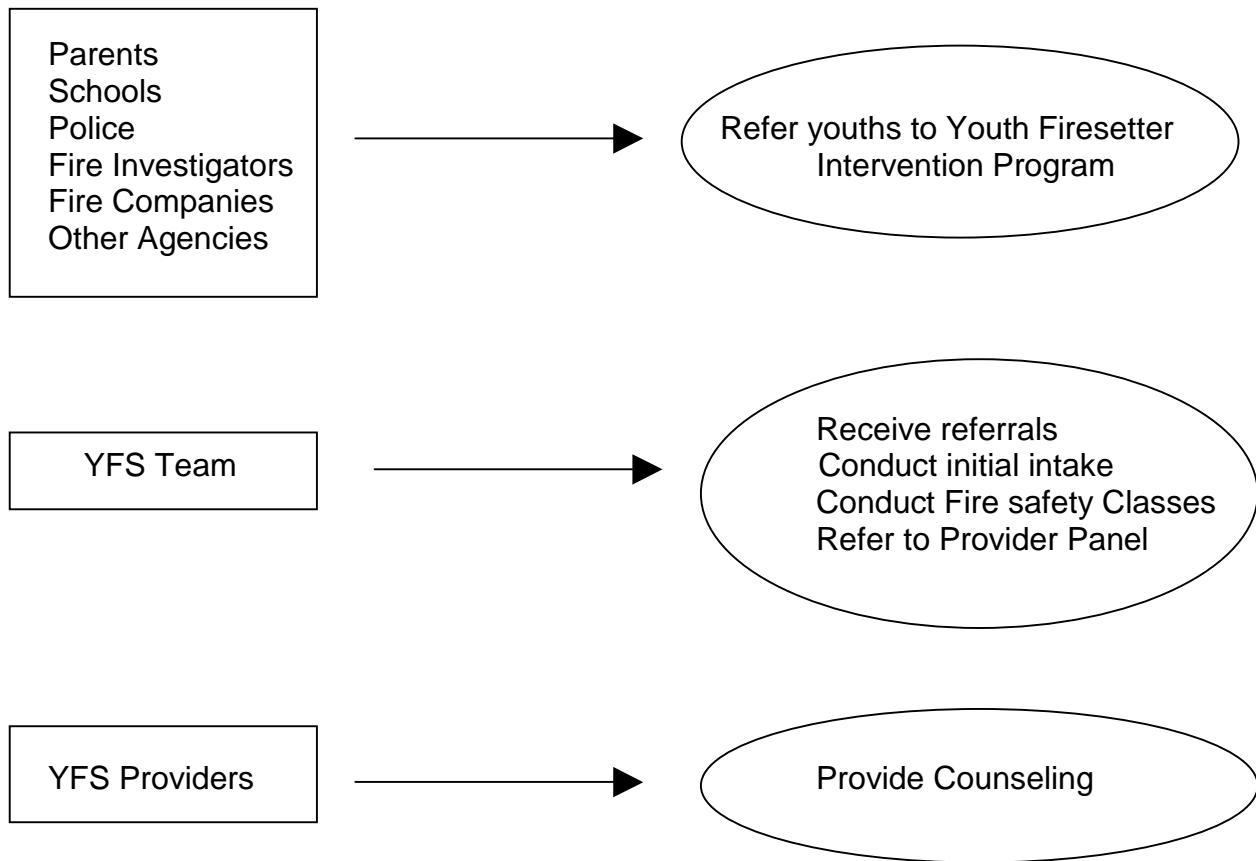
The Youth Firesetter Intervention Program developed a new tool for the Valley school's to make referring a student to our program easier. The handbook covers in detail making a referral, reasons for firesetting, child development and firesetting, and the Arizona law on reporting school fires. Our statistics show an increase in referrals from this source due to the training and contact the program has implemented this year.

Spanish Fire and Life Safety Class

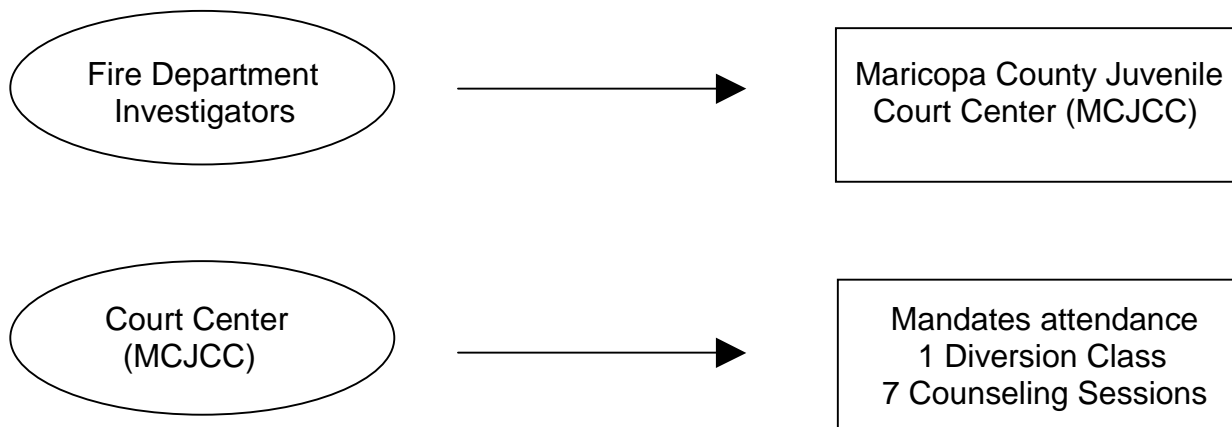
In July of 2002, the Youth Firesetter Intervention Program hosted the first ever all Spanish Fire and Life Safety Class. The class was held at the Immaculate Heart Church Gymnasium and all information and class discussion was in Spanish. Topics covered were Fire Safety, Water Safety and Gun Safety. The event was publicized in print, on local Hispanic Radio, and flyers distributed to Hispanic businesses. The class was a success in reaching out to our Hispanic community. The program will continue to offer these services on a quarterly basis. The location will rotate to better serve our community.



Referral Process for Educational and/or Behavioral Health Components



Referral Process for Diversion Program



Firesetter Characteristics





FIRESETTER CHARACTERISTICS

Descriptive categories of youth firesetters:

1. Curious
2. Crisis
3. Delinquent
4. Strategic
5. Pathological

The Phoenix Fire Department Youth Firesetter Provider Panel compiled these characteristics based on youth firesetters seen by the Phoenix Fire Department.

The characteristics are divided into three areas - **Profile**, **Family/Social Dynamics**, and **Firesetting Behaviors** - to aid in determining the proper course of intervention to be utilized.

I. Curious Firesetter

Profile

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typically a younger child• Low impulse control• Hands-on learner/explores environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Active• May experience fear, sadness, loss• May continue to set fires without intervention
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Family/Social Dynamics

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Various types of households• Lack of adequate supervision• Easy access to sources of ignition• General lack of safety awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Caregivers tried to stop the behaviors• Caregivers may deny their child's involvement• Caregivers often respond with fear, embarrassment
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Firesetting Behaviors

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typically uses matches or lighters• Ignites items found in the home• Hidden locations (closet, under bed)• Unsophisticated fires	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recent onset• May try to extinguish the fires• May ignore the fires• No identifiable pattern/history
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II. Crisis Firesetter

Profile

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experienced recent crisis/trauma• History of firesetting• Unable to identify/express feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor coping skills• Lack of appropriate remorse• Deny/lie about cause of fire• Lacks problem solving skills
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Family/Social Dynamics

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Various types of households• Chaotic environment• Possible neglect or abuse• Easy access to sources of ignition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Caregiver may blame themselves• Caregiver focuses on fire incident instead of problem• Caregiver usually willing to accept help
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Firesetting Behaviors

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relatively unsophisticated fires• Usually use matches or lighters• May be symbolic of the crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Motivated by frustration• May be a cry for help
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III. Delinquent Firesetter

Profile

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typically an adolescent• Poor interpersonal skills• Lacking good judgment• Impulsive and irresponsible• Risk taker who opposes authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• History of academic and/or behavior problems• Often deny or lie about origin of fire• Embarrassed and afraid of consequences when caught
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Family/Social Dynamics

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peer dominated• Dysfunctional family• Lack of adequate supervision• Caregivers have made numerous attempts for help	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Caregivers embarrassed and/or angry about fire• Caregivers fearful of legal/financial consequences• Caregivers receptive to assistance
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Firesetting Behaviors

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School fires• Most often set with peers• Not sophisticated• Fireworks, smoke bombs, false alarms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outdoor locations (dumpsters, desert, alleys, brush, fences)• Use common accelerants• History of firesetting
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IV. Strategic Firesetter

Profile

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typically a teenager• History of delinquent behavior• May be involved with juvenile justice• Regards legal consequences as a joke• Low self-esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May brag to peers• Probable gang affiliation• Failure to experience guilt• History of substance use/abuse
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Family/Social Dynamics

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alienated from caretakers and society• History of school problems• History of substance use/abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peer dominated• Little or no family involvement• Caretakers will defer responsibility
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Firesetting Behaviors

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May be set with peers• Set in conjunction with other crimes• Usually use accelerants• Multiple points of origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set to cause harm or destruction• Revenge fires• Fires are well planned
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V. Pathological Firesetter*

Profile

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• History of medical and/or neurological problems• Possible high IQ• Academic and behavior problems• Difficulty establishing relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• History of severe emotional and psychological disorders• Victim of physical and sexual abuse• Loner• Life-long fascination with fire
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Family/Social Dynamics

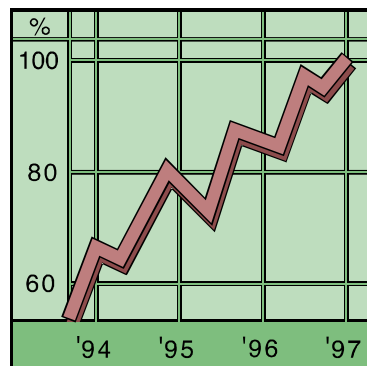
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neglectful caregivers• Caregivers abusive and possibly incestuous• Home life unstructured	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Substance abuse possible• Socially isolated• Caregiver involvement questionable
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Firesetting Behaviors

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long history of firesetting• Multiple incidents• Ritualistic• Fires have a distinct pattern	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Secretly proud of their fires• Sophisticated and cleverly set• Usually very destructive
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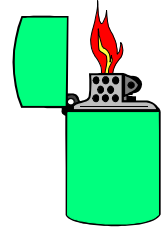
* Smallest percent of firesetters are in this category

Statistics





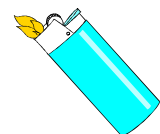
**Phoenix Fire Department
Youth Firesetter Intervention Program
1999 - 2002**



Statistics

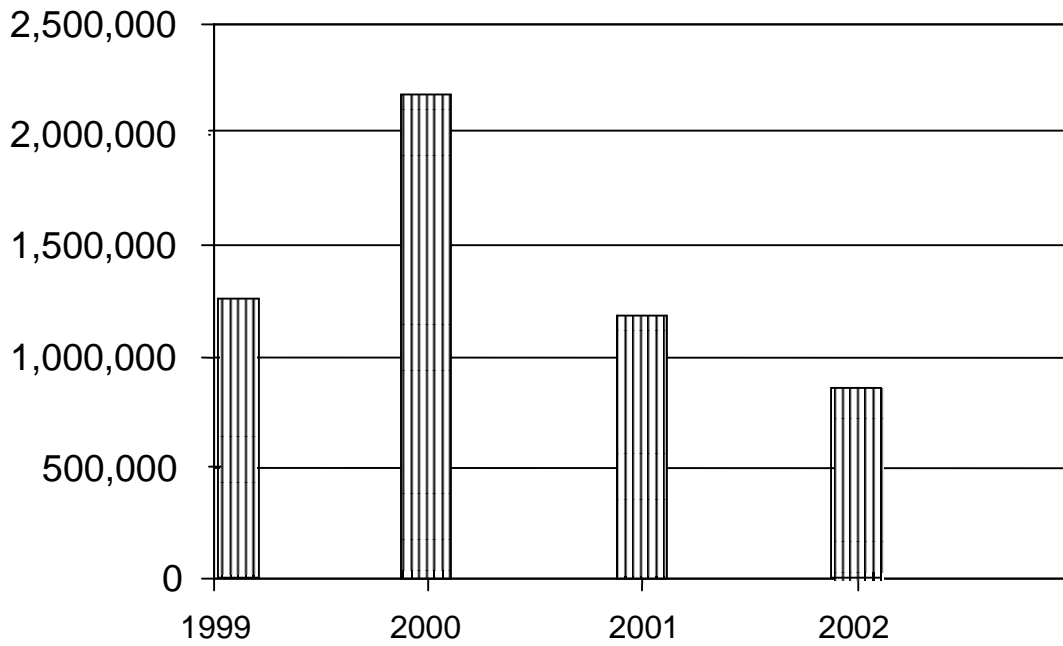
Topic	1999	2000	2001	2002
Dollar loss related to investigated youth set fires	\$1,262,505	\$2,193,705	\$1,189,480	\$775,720
Family requests for assistance	150	150	115	162
Fire company referrals	80	97	122	85
Police, School, and other referrals	38	58	72	121
Investigator referrals	75	65	58	67
Attendance at Fire Safety Class (voluntary)	349 youths 251 adults	351 youths 245 adults	370 youths 245 adults	424 youths 313 adults (Phoenix & West Valley Classes)
Attendance at West Valley Fire Safety Class (voluntary) started March 2002				106 youths 73 adults
Arson Arrests	13 youths 22 adults	26 youths 15 adults	20 youths 16 adults	13 youths 19 adults
Percentage of youths arrested	37%	63%	56%	41%
Attended *MCJCC Diversion Program (mandatory)	29 youths 29 adults	29 youths 26 adults	32 youths 36 adults	23 youths 23 adults
Families and youth referred for counseling	50	76	76	63

* Maricopa County Juvenile Court Center

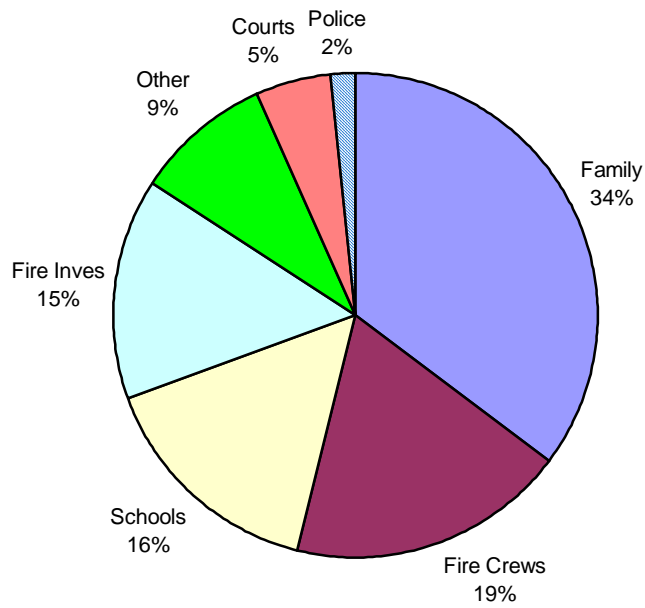


Youth Firesetter Intervention Program 1999 - 2002

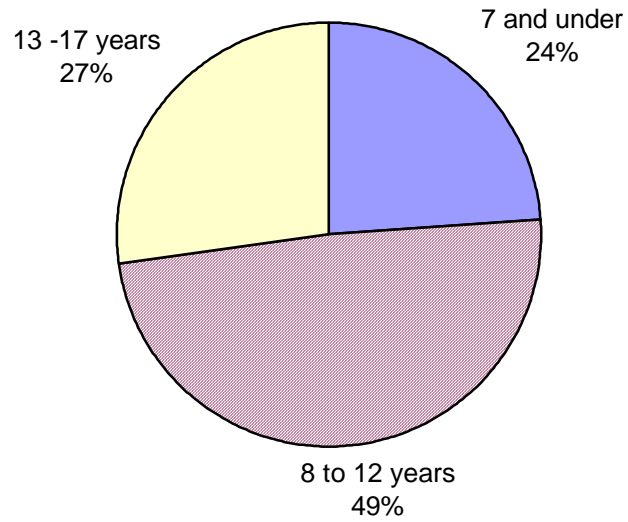
Property Value Dollar Loss



Referral Sources



Referrals by age group



Ignitions Sources

